

## Italian Canadiana

### Circelli, Carmela. Love and Rain

Lisa Viviani

---

Volume 38, numéro 1, printemps 2024

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1111799ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.33137/ic.v38i1.43413>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

---

Éditeur(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0827-6129 (imprimé)

2564-2340 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

---

Citer ce compte rendu

Viviani, L. (2024). Compte rendu de [Circelli, Carmela. Love and Rain]. *Italian Canadiana*, 38(1), 97–99. <https://doi.org/10.33137/ic.v38i1.43413>

---

© Lisa Viviani, 2024



Cet document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter en ligne.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/>

---

**érudit**

Cet article est diffusé et préservé par Érudit.

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche.

<https://www.erudit.org/fr/>

**Circelli, Carmela. *Love and Rain*. Toronto: Guernica Editions, 2023. Pp. 271. ISBN 978-1-77183-813-9 (paperback) \$20.**

“[S]ometimes, someone can just walk into your life, out of the blue, and turn it upside down, or right side up” (47). Thus, in Carmela Circelli’s most recent book, *Daniel*, the love interest of the protagonist Chiara, summarizes Pasolini’s *Teorema*. In fact, the same words could summarize the novel itself. After all, Chiara never experienced true love until Daniel walked into her life and changed it all. However, as one reads along, it becomes clear that *Love and Rain* is more than a simple love story: it is a story about Eros.

When entering Chiara’s life, Daniel does not initiate a process of spiritual growth – unlike the Christ-like figure in Pasolini’s movie –, but rather a psychological development that Jung would define as individuation, the self-realization process. The author’s own education and professional training as a psychotherapist, indeed, strongly influence the conception of the novel, which is structured as a therapeutic dialogue. Circelli herself recalls that psychoanalysis has been defined as the “talking cure” so for her therapy is a conversation (<https://prstoronto.com/therapists/carmela-circelli/>).

In the first part, “Half the Perfect World” (9–72), Chiara’s voice reports the journey of self-discovery she embarks on with her therapist during the moment of personal identity crisis provoked by her encounter with Daniel. The second section, “Tangled Up in Blue” (73–186), consists of Francesca’s letters to her friend Paolo, who is now Chiara’s boss in the flower shop where she works. Reading Francesca’s narrative of her life as a second-generation migrant in Canada first and as an irregular member of the *Brigate Rosse* in Rome later, Chiara discovers that Francesca is, in fact, her aunt. When Micola, Francesca’s sister, was a teenager, she gave Chiara up for adoption. In the third part, “Rainy Night House” (187–232), the narrator is Cassandra, the nurse who took care of Micola after she followed her mother and sister back to Italy during the years of her depression following Chiara’s birth and her father’s accidental death. In the novel’s final section, “If You Wait” (233–269), as if re-emerging from the meanderings of her psyche that brought her in touch with her ancestry, Chiara regains her own voice narrating her reconciliation with Daniel and her mother, thus concluding the Jungian process of self-realization recovering her wholeness.

*Love and Rain* is thus also an acute reflection on storytelling. Indeed, what are humans if not animals with *logos*? Therapy proves that we are the stories we tell. It is through the word that we can make sense of our world and

connect with the other. But if we are the stories we tell, we are also the stories we read. Not only does Chiara recover her identity by reading Francesca's letters, but she also lives and feels through the narrative. In fact, empirical literary studies, neuroscience, and psychology have explored the correlation between immersive reading and empathy. As if to celebrate the power of literary transportation, Circelli shows the worth of fiction on different occasions when Chiara, apathetic in real life, gets emotional with fictional characters.

In the end, the various narratives comprising *Love and Rain* make up Chiara's Self. Resembling a psychotherapeutic session in itself, the novel gradually opens the Chinese boxes of Chiara's psyche bringing to her consciousness the collective and personal unconscious within her. On the one hand, in reading Francesca's letters, Chiara re-discovers her ancestry. On the other hand, in learning about her mother Micola, Chiara is erotically moved since *Love and Rain* is a story about Eros in the Jungian sense, namely, the *Anima* of a woman, her intrinsic feminine, her relational function. At the beginning, Chiara is overwhelmed by her feelings for Daniel and flees, unable to accept the more sensitive part of her Self. A graduate student of philosophy, she is pure Logos, the one seeking "depth and whimsy" (15) in men, not love. Unlike her mother Micola, the Eros par excellence, Chiara is possessed by her *Animus* and escapes passion and emotions, hence her exacerbated and distorted feminism. Behind her constant attack against men, which she justifies as a counter-attack "if they're always grading our bodies, why can't we grade their minds" (14), there seems to lie the mere intent to annoy men, which Jung would explain as the typical behaviour of intellectual women with overpowering *Animus*.

This overwhelming strength of Logos serves Circelli also for a sharp criticism of ideology. Chiara's story is paralleled by Francesca's story. Unlike her sister Micola, Francesca retreats from love after the disillusion with Paolo and joins the proletarian cause imitating her hyper-masculine cousin Octavio. In the fight for justice that brings her to be implicated in the assassination of the Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro during the Years of Lead, Francesca is driven by Logos, sucked into a cause that she herself will later recognize as "a purely male world [. . .] seen from the sterile lens of pure abstraction, inflexibility applied without concern for life or living" (185).

*Love and Rain* is thus also a subtle reflection on the relation between history and story or, to use Miguel de Unamuno's term, intrahistory (*intra-historia*), the silent stories of ordinary people never chronicled by official historiography. Francesca's is the story of a woman whose name will not be

reported in the history books. After all, she was not Aldo Moro's assassin, but just someone who bought some aviator caps at the Trastevere flea market. She did not join the *Brigate Rosse* for some higher abstract ideal of justice, but just because she needed a cause where to direct her personal rage resulting from the disillusion for her unreciprocated love, the anger for her father's death, and the atavistic resentment of her immigrant community for its inferior socio-economic condition. To borrow Unamuno's metaphor of the sea, while official history is only the surface, the lives of Francesca and the other protagonists are its deep and dark bottom.

But the sea metaphor is also used by Jung for the collective unconscious and the feminine, hence the mother. It is probably not a coincidence, therefore, that Micola is defined as a siren when she spends the day in Amalfi contemplating the waves of the sea. Thus, she becomes a complex symbol. Not only is she the mother-land of the eradicated migrant whose voice, when she sings in Italian, is that of a lost past still surviving in the heart of Italians transplanted to Canada. She is also Chiara's real mother and the mother of the collective unconscious. She is a sea creature sitting in the rain for hours: she is the rain, the water, the unconscious. With her beauty, femininity, and passion, she is Eros, the feminine half of Chiara's Self, the principle she needs to balance her Logos. Not by chance, only when reconciling with Micola, Chiara really completes her individuation and Love rains, or – if one pays more attention to the sound than to the lyrics as singers like Micola often do – Love reigns.

LISA VIVIANI

*Western University*